

STARS AND STRIPES®

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A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

stripes.com

Iraqis, Kurds say US air support thin

The Washington Post

KANHASH, Iraq — Iraqi and Kurdish forces have relied heavily on U.S.-led coalition jets as they have won back territory from the Islamic State.

Now, in the country's largest offensive since the 2003 invasion, some say they aren't getting what was promised.

Iraqi army commanders advancing from the southeast complain that they have been forgotten, while even counterterrorism troops, who work closely with the U.S.-led coalition, said air cover was disappointing on their first day in the fight.

A Kurdish security official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic, said the air support was "very limited" and that Kurdish forces had taken heavy casualties as a result when they opened a new front on Thursday.

U.S. officials say they have large amounts of air power backing the push for the city, which was launched on Monday, but there are more fronts to support than ever before in an operation against the militants. Tens of thousands of Iraqi troops are closing in on the city from the north, south and east, and coalition jets are also bombing militants across the border in Syria.

"Mosul is the largest operation conducted to date; there are a lot more targets, more axes of attack," said Col. John Dorrian, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Baghdad. "One of the immutable truths of air support is that there will always be more demand than supply."

The coalition is working with Kurdish and Iraqi forces to better "sequence" operations to resolve the issue, he said.

In Baghdad, Carter talks Mosul

BY TARA COPP
Stars and Stripes

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declined on Saturday a potential agreement between Baghdad and Ankara that would allow Turkish troops to participate in the fight for Mosul.

During a meeting with Secretary of Defense Ash Carter that addressed ongoing operations against the Islamic State group in Mosul and a possible post-conflict roles for the almost 5,000 U.S. forces there, al-Abadi told Carter that while Baghdad was interested in maintaining good relations with Ankara, it was not interested in having Turkey have a role in the campaign to liberate the city. The day before in a visit to Turkey Carter had said that Ankara had agreed in principle to having a role in Mosul that potentially could de-escalate tensions between the two countries.

On Saturday, al-Abadi said "the Mosul battle is an Iraqi battle and the ones who are conducting it are Iraqis."

"I know that the Turks want to participate; we tell them, 'Thank you, this is something the Iraqis will handle, and the Iraqis will liberate Mosul and the rest of the territories,'" he said.

If help is needed, "we will ask for it from Turkey or from

other regional countries," Abadi told Carter, according to pool reports from the meeting.

Carter also received an operational update from the top commander of U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend.

As he visited Baghdad, Iraq's counterterrorism forces and its army advanced into the town of Qara Qosh, located about 20 miles southeast of Mosul, and Kurdish forces reached their final forward line of advance, also about 20 miles east of Mosul, said a Baghdad-based U.S. military official who briefed reporters traveling with Carter. The Kurdish forces will hold the territory as Iraqi security forces begin to move into the city, the official said condition of anonymity.

The 18,000 Iraqi security forces and the estimated 10,000 Kurdish fighters have formed an arc around the northern, eastern and southern borders of Mosul. The Islamic State has an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 fighters inside the city and another 1,000 to 1,500 on the outskirts.

The terror group has responded with defenses intended to halt the forces' forward progress, the official said. For example, earlier this week, the Islamic State group set fire to a sulfur plant near Qayarah West, an airfield the U.S.

has returned to and rebuilt in order to be able to provide Iraqi forces better logistical support during the Mosul fight. A wind shift resulted in the smoke from the sulfur fires floating over Mosul, which has caused some U.S. troops to wear their chemical protection masks, the official said.

On Friday, Islamic State fighters launched a surprise raid on the nearby city of Kirkuk in an action U.S. military officials said was an attempt to divert attention from the Mosul fight. The tactics "are not unexpected as we tighten the noose on Daesh," the military official said, using a derogatory term for the Islamic State group.

Another primary focus of the meetings was how to avoid a post-battle humanitarian and governance crisis for the city's million residents. The inhabitants of the Sunni-majority city have been under the Islamic State group's rule since the city was captured in 2014.

Carter said U.S. forces are likely to have a role in Iraq beyond the fall of Mosul, training Iraqi forces in counterinsurgency and aiding stabilization efforts.

"We are discussing that with the Iraqi government," Carter said. "In the end, the decision remains with the Iraqi government."

Sailor is first US death in fight for Mosul

Stars and Stripes

SAN ANTONIO — A Navy explosive ordnance disposal technician was killed in Iraq on Thursday, the first death of a U.S. servicemember during the battle to retake Mosul from the Islamic State group.

Chief Petty Officer Jason C. Finan, 34, of Anaheim, Calif.,

was identified Friday as the servicemember killed by an improvised explosive device while serving in an advisory role with Iraqi coalition troops, Lt. Cmdr. Jennifer Cragg, a Navy spokeswoman, said Friday in a news release.

Finan was medevaced to Irbil but died there as a result

of his injuries.

Finan was assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 3 based in Coronado, Calif., Cragg said. Finan's service record includes the Navy Marine Corps Commendation with a V for valor, along with campaign ribbons for service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Navy operates in South China Sea

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Navy warship on Friday passed through waters claimed by China near disputed islands in the South China Sea, the Defense Department said, drawing Chinese condemnation.

A department spokesman, Navy Cmdr. Gary Ross, said the USS Decatur conducted the transit operation near the Paracel Islands. He said it was done “in a routine, lawful manner without ship escorts and without incident.”

A Chinese defense ministry statement called it “a gravely illegal act” and “intentionally provocative.” The Chinese navy sent a guided missile destroyer and an escort vessel that “spotted and verified the American ships and warned them to leave,” the statement said.

The Paracels, a group of islands and reefs, are occupied

by China but are also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan. Ross said the ship passed within an “excessive” claim of territorial waters by China between two land features, although it did not go within 12 nautical miles of them.

The U.S. Navy has now conducted four freedom-of-navigation operations in the past year in the South China Sea, where China has reclaimed land on a massive scale to assert its claim to disputed features.

China has looked dimly upon the U.S. operations, which it views as meddling in waters where the U.S. does not have territorial claims. Friday’s operation comes a day after Rodrigo Duterte, the leader of the Philippines, one of the six governments with claims in the South China Sea, announced during a visit to Beijing his nation’s “separation” from the U.S., as he seeks to deepen ties with China.

Ross said the operation was unrelated to any such event.

The Chinese statement accused the U.S. of being a “troublemaker” in the South China Sea at a time when “under the joint efforts of countries in this region” the situation is developing positively.

Ross said the U.S. conducts these operations on a regular basis around the world. He said the operation “demonstrated that coastal states may not unlawfully restrict the navigation rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea” that all states are entitled to exercise under international law.

“This operation was about challenging excessive maritime claims, not territorial claims to land features. The United States has been clear that we take no position on competing territorial sovereignty claims to naturally formed land features in the South China Sea,” he said.

Reading program connects families

BY CHRIS CHURCH

Stars and Stripes

ABOARD THE USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER — Petty Officer 1st Class Char-dae Longshore sat with a book in her hands and a smile on her face in the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower’s museum, surrounded by pictures of ship operations, historical posters, and a bust of the former president for whom the ship is named.

Facing her was a camera, the light turning red to show it had started recording.

“Hi, Braylen. If you’re getting this video, it means it’s time for bed,” Longshore said. “Mommy loves you.”

Longshore, like other sailors during Ike’s deployment to the Middle East, was participating in a program called United Through Reading, which allowed her to be video-recorded reading a bedtime story to her son in Virginia — thousands of miles from the carrier’s current location.

“I try to make sure I call him once or twice a week,” Longshore said. “When we hit ports, I make sure I FaceTime him so that he can see me. But it’s very difficult. He starts elementary school this year, so I’m going to miss his first day of ‘big-boy school,’ as I tell him. So it’s very hard for me.”

United Through Reading, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization, tries to bridge the distance between families and to create emotional bonds by recording the servicemembers as they read to their children and sending those DVDs home. The program also encourages children to read along with their deployed parents.

The program serves all branches of the military in hundreds of locations worldwide.

Concerns raised about troops’ online security

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — In a letter to the Pentagon Friday, Rep. Duncan Hunter said he was concerned a contract to provide internet service to deployed soldiers could allow the use of Russian satellites, jeopardizing troops’ privacy and security.

Previous service at bases’ internet cafes had “stringent security measures,” Hunter wrote to Army Lt. Gen. Alan Lynn, the head of the Defense Information Systems Agency. But he said he was worried the “contracting arrangement creates unnecessary security risks, given that our deployed warfighters could be exposed to transmitting their personal information over unprotected networks that are controlled by foreign and potentially hostile entities.”

In an interview, Hunter, a California Republican who served three tours as a Marine, said, “this is one of the dumbest things we could do. Why give the Russians the ability to basi-

cally spy on American military personnel when there are so many other options?”

A DISA spokesperson said the agency could not discuss the provisions of the contract or which companies may have submitted offers.

Hunter’s concerns come at a time of heightened tension between the United States and Russia. Earlier this month, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Department of Homeland Security officially accused Russia of hacking the computers of the Democratic National Committee and other political organizations in an effort to undermine the presidential election.

Community is confident that the Russian Government directed the recent compromises of emails from U.S. persons and institutions, including from U.S. political organizations,” said a joint statement from the two agencies. “... These thefts and disclosures are intended to interfere with the U.S. election

process.”

Federal law prevents using the satellites of many adversarial countries, such as North Korea and China, said Hunter, a member of the Armed Services Committee. But while there is no provision that specifically bars the use of Russian satellites, Hunter said it’s clear Russia is no ally and that the Pentagon should not be using its hardware.

“It just seems that [the Department of Defense] isn’t using their heads at all,” he said.

The contract would be to provide internet service at Moral, Welfare and Recreation centers in Iraq and Afghanistan. While being deployed for months at a time, troops inevitably have to transmit sensitive information, he said.

“You have people talking to their family, talking about their banking,” Hunter said. “Your spouse might ask you, ‘Honey, what’s the last four of your social?’”

Ex-NSA contractor to remain in custody

Associated Press

BALTIMORE — A former National Security Agency contractor accused in a massive theft of classified information will remain in custody as prosecutors continue building a criminal case against him, a federal judge ruled Friday.

U.S. Magistrate Judge A. David Copperthite agreed with prosecutors that Harold T. Martin III of Glen Burnie, Md., represented a flight risk if released and said there was no doubt that the top secret information he was accused of stealing over two decades is something “this country’s enemies would love to explore.”

Martin’s lawyers foreshadowed their upcoming defense, describing him as a “compulsive hoarder” and saying there was no evidence he ever shared the information with a foreign coun-

try or even intended to do so.

“He’s not Edward Snowden,” said James Wyda, the federal defender representing Martin, referring to the former NSA contractor who three years ago disclosed to journalists secret information about government surveillance programs.

Wyda said Martin, a former U.S. Navy lieutenant, never intended to harm his country and was instead a “voracious” learner who got carried away over the years as he took home documents in a perhaps misguided effort to be as skilled at his job as he could be. He suggested Martin grappled with mental health issues.

“This was not spycraft behavior,” Wyda said. “This is not how a Russian spy, or something like that, would ever conduct himself.”

“This,” he added, “was the behavior of a compulsive

hoarder.”

The Justice Department presented a vastly different portrait.

Prosecutors have said FBI agents who searched Martin’s home and car in August found evidence of a “breathtaking” theft of top secret government information. Investigators found records dated from 1996 to 2016, seized dozens of computers and digital storage devices and, all told, recovered some 50 terabytes of information — or enough to fill roughly 200 laptops. A substantial amount of that information, prosecutors said, was highly classified.

“There is no reason to believe that the defendant would have ever stopped but for the intervention of law enforcement,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Zachary Myers said.

Myers said Martin’s knowledge of secret government

programs could make him a “high-value recruitment target from foreign intelligence services.” Prosecutors have said he has been communicating online in foreign languages, including Russian.

A complaint unsealed earlier this month charged Martin with theft of government property and unauthorized removal and retention of classified materials, which together carry a combined maximum of 11 years in prison. But Myers said in court Friday that the Justice Department has evidence to bring additional charges under the Espionage Act, which would expose Martin to far more severe penalties if convicted.

Martin, like Snowden, worked as a contractor for Booz Allen Hamilton. The company has said he’s since been fired.

Army, Tufts open center to study responses to stress

Associated Press

BOSTON — The U.S. Army and Tufts University are working together to learn more about how people think and respond under stress.

Their new cognitive sciences center officially opened Tuesday in Medford, Mass. The research aims to help soldiers and civilian first responders, such as firefighters.

Scientists and engineers are figuring out how to measure, predict and enhance people’s cognitive capabilities, so they can better solve problems and remember information in high-stakes environments.

The Center for Applied Brain and Cognitive Sciences was jointly founded by the Army’s Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center and Tufts. It’s part of the Tufts School of Engineering.

The center features an immersive virtual reality lab where an individual’s or a team’s neurological, psychological and behavioral responses

can be monitored.

A team of soldiers can be placed in a large city environment and told to navigate their way to a meeting point while researchers track how they communicate with one another and distinguish between friends and foes, for example, said Caroline Mahoney, a cognitive science expert for the Army and co-director of the center. Firefighters and SWAT teams will use the lab, too.

Mahoney said the center is an innovative collaboration because it brings together military and academic researchers from many different disciplines, from engineering and neuroscience to psychology and robotics.

Researchers are working with paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division to improve their memory and learning under stress.

Taylor and Mahoney said the center’s research could influence the design of equipment and technologies for soldiers and first responders.

Vets get short shrift as for-profit colleges close

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — When for-profit giants Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institutes shuttered, thousands of veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan lost more than \$1 billion in federal education funding. And as the men and women who have served in our military try to finish up their degree, they risk exhausting what’s left of those benefits before graduation, according to an investigation by the staff of Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del.

Carper and other members of Congress are urging their colleagues to provide the Veterans Affairs Department authority to restore GI Bill benefits for students who attend schools that permanently close.

Enacted in 2009, the post-9/11 GI Bill has provided more than \$65 billion for tuition, books and housing to 1.6 million veterans and their families. Recipients can only use the benefits for 36 months of vocational or college

education. If a veteran used GI Bill benefits to cover tuition at ITT Tech for two years, she would not have enough benefits left to finish up a bachelor’s degree.

Nearly 7,000 veterans were pursuing degrees at ITT Tech before it closed in September. ITT Tech, like other for-profit colleges, aggressively recruited veterans because their benefits served as a stable source of revenue. Money from the GI Bill is also exempt from a law that restricts the share of federal student aid funding for-profit colleges can collect.

Carper’s staff found that nearly 9,000 veterans have lost their GI Bill benefits as a result of the closure of ITT Tech, Corinthian and 70 other schools that have closed since July 2013.

As a result, Carper is urging Congress to allow the VA to require schools that pose financial risks to set aside funds to reduce the cost of restoring benefits to veterans.

Early voting off to fast start

With 4.4 million votes cast, candidates' each show strengths

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hillary Clinton appears to be displaying strength in the crucial battleground states of North Carolina and Florida among voters casting ballots before Election Day, and she may also be building an early vote advantage in Arizona and Colorado.

Donald Trump, meanwhile, appears to be holding ground in Ohio, Iowa and Georgia, according to data compiled by The Associated Press. Those are important states for Trump but not sufficient for him to win the presidency if he loses states such as Florida or North Carolina.

Early voting is off to a fast start. More than 4.4 million votes have been cast already, far outpacing the rate for this period in 2012. Balloting is underway in 34 out of 37 early-voting states.

In all, more than 45 million people are expected to vote before Election Day — or as much as 40 percent of all votes cast.

The outcome of those ballots won't be known until counting begins after polls close on Nov. 8, but some clues are available.

Some states report party affiliation, as well as breakdowns by race and gender.

A look at early voting trends:

■ The Clinton campaign is looking to build an insurmountable lead in Florida and North Carolina during early voting. If she wins either, she'll probably be the next president.

In North Carolina, Democrats have moved ahead of Republicans in early voting. Republicans had held a modest lead based on mail-in ballots returned. After in-person voting began on Thursday, Democrats overtook Republicans in overall votes cast.

In Florida, a record 3.1 million people have requested ballots, more than one-third of the total voters in 2012. Democrats have requested almost as many ballots as Republicans: 39 percent vs. 40 percent.

Democrats are also showing momentum in the 2nd congressional district of Maine and Nebraska. The two states allocate electoral votes by congressional district.

■ Early voting is surging in Arizona, another state Trump can't afford to lose.

More than 1.9 million ballots have been requested and 36,000 returned.

Democrats have a 44 percent to 31 percent lead over Republicans in ballots returned. Another 25 percent were independent or unknown.

In Colorado, Democrats led 43 percent to 30 percent among the 15,280 ballots returned by late Thursday.

■ Early vote data points to potential Trump strength in Ohio, Iowa and Georgia.

In Ohio, data compiled by Michael McDonald, a University of Florida professor who runs the U.S. Elections Project, continue to show big declines in ballot requests in the heavily Democratic counties of Cuyahoga and Franklin.

The state does not break down ballots by party affiliation.

In Georgia, which also does not report party affiliation, ballot requests and returns from black voters trailed 2012 levels.

And in Iowa, Democrats lead early requests, 43 percent to 36 percent. That level is down from 2012. Obama won the state that year based on a strong early vote in his favor.

Landing might have wrecked Mars probe

Associated Press

BERLIN — Scientists say Europe's experimental Mars probe has hit the right spot but may have been destroyed in a fiery ball of rocket fuel because it was traveling too fast.

Pictures taken by a NASA satellite show a black spot where the Schiaparelli lander was meant to touch down Wednesday, the European Space Agency said.

The agency said in a statement that the probe struck the surface at a speed exceeding 186 mph, after dropping from a height between 1.4 to 2.4 miles, "therefore impacting at a considerable speed."

Schiaparelli was designed to test technology for a more ambitious European Mars landing in 2020. The European Space Agency said the probe's mother ship was successfully placed into orbit Wednesday and soon will begin analyzing the Martian atmosphere in search for evidence of life.

Agency chief Jan Woerner said engineers received a wealth of data from the lander before the crash that will prove valuable for the next attempt in four years.

The European Space Agency said that, according to what its scientists have been able to piece together, Schiaparelli suffered problems during the last 50 seconds of its descent through the harsh atmosphere.

The picture taken by NASA's orbiter shows a bright spot of about 39 feet in diameter. The agency says that's likely to be Schiaparelli's parachute.

The second feature was described as "a fuzzy dark patch roughly 15 by 40 meters in size" north of the parachute. That's likely to be the lander.

ESA said the other part of the ExoMars mission — the Trace Gas Orbiter — was "working very well and will take science calibration data during two orbits in November."

1 classification change in new batch of emails

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One document in a new batch of Hillary Clinton's emails released by the State Department on Friday contains classified information.

The department posted to its website 112 documents that the FBI recovered during its investigation into Clinton's private email server. In one email, the department censored several paragraphs that it determined contained "foreign government information" deemed "confidential" — the lowest level of classification. Several other documents published Friday also contain classified information, but they are from email chains that were previously classified and released in earlier tranches

of Clinton's email, according to the State Department

The message in question, to Clinton from her deputy chief of staff Huma Abedin on Nov. 26, 2010, contains readouts of two telephone conversations a senior U.S. diplomat had with top leaders from the United Arab Emirates. The paragraphs with the descriptions of the calls with the Emirati officials were not marked classified when Clinton received the email. They were redacted entirely for public release under Freedom of Information Act standards Thursday.

State Department spokesman John Kirby said the classification does not necessarily mean the information was mishandled at the time it was sent or

received.

"While foreign government information may be protected from public release, both the executive order on classification and the Foreign Affairs Manual acknowledge that FGI often can be maintained on unclassified systems," he said. "There are specific rules for how to handle FGI material given how we receive it. In other words, maintaining FGI on unclassified systems may not amount to mishandling the information."

The FBI provided the State Department with about 14,900 emails purported not to have been among the 55,000 pages of work-related documents that Clinton had turned over and that had been previously released.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Grand jury to hear case of tree fire

AL OPELIKA — Grand jurors will consider additional charges against a man arrested following a fire that an expert says probably killed one of the new oak trees at Toomer's Corner in Auburn.

The Opelika-Auburn News reported that a judge decided to send the case against Jochen Wiest, 29, to a grand jury following a hearing Wednesday.

Wiest was arrested after flames engulfed toilet paper covering a tree at Toomer's Corner after Auburn beat LSU on Sept. 24. The tree is a replacement for one of the oaks poisoned by an Alabama football fan.

A police officer testified Wiest was wearing an Auburn cap and had a lighter. And a tree expert testified the burned oak is likely dead.

DNR nixes dinners after complaint filed

WI MILWAUKEE — Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources says it will no longer host social dinners for board members the night before regular meetings.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported the move comes in the wake of a complaint filed over a possible violation of the state's open meetings law.

Opponents of a snowmobile trail in Blue Mound State Park alleged the board broke state law when it met for dinner in January and discussed business before voting the next day to approve a new park master plan.

DNR spokesman Jim Dick said the board will shelve the long-standing social dinners in "a desire for the utmost transparency." He said it also will take up the snowmobile issue

again. The board will take additional public comment at its monthly meeting in December.

Postal carrier filmed dumping bins of mail

GA DECATUR — The U.S. Postal Service has launched an investigation after a metro Atlanta resident says she filmed a worker dumping hundreds of pieces of mail in the woods.

Kellie Campbell of DeKalb County told WSB-TV she recorded the postal worker walking near a fence and dumping several bins of mail into a ditch.

Campbell called the Postal Service, which sent workers to collect and deliver the mail.

In a statement, the Postal Service condemned the unlawful disposal of mail and said it was investigating the incident.

Cross ordered taken down; permit required

CA CARLSBAD — Officials in Carlsbad said a 15-foot wooden cross erected on a hilltop in a park violates city rules and must come down.

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported Monday that someone erected the cross without a permit two weeks ago on city-owned land known as Veterans Park, an undeveloped area with miles of hiking trails.

The city posted a warning notice on the cross Friday stating that it must be removed within 72 hours or officials would take it down and place it in storage. No one had removed the fixture by Monday evening.

An official in the coastal city north of San Diego told the newspaper the cross would be removed because it was erected without a permit, not because

of its religious symbolism.

3 hurt by paintballs in 2 separate incidents

PA PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia police said they're looking for someone who fired pellets and paintballs at three people in two separate incidents.

WPVI-TV reported the incidents happened in west Philadelphia.

In the first, a man was hit in the left eye and will take months to see normally. He says whoever shot him was riding around in a car. In the second incident, Monday evening, two teens were hit in their arms and legs.

Police said the incidents happened near the intersection of 52nd Street and Jefferson Avenue. The shots appeared to come from an apartment building on Monday evening.

Man sentenced for theft of jail food

MS HATTIESBURG — A Hattiesburg man, who pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit theft and mail fraud charges in the alleged theft of food from Forrest County Jail, has been sentenced in federal court.

The Hattiesburg American reported Jerry Woodland, 54, was sentenced Monday to one year in prison and three years of post-release supervision. In addition, Woodland must repay over \$443,000 to Forrest County.

Prosecutors said Woodland and a former co-worker, the late Allen Haralson, and others were accused of mail fraud after drafting and submitting various Forrest County purchase requisition forms for food and food-related items that were purchased by invoices.

Woodland and Haralson had

worked in the kitchen at the jail. Woodland pleaded guilty Dec. 15, 2014. Haralson, who pleaded guilty Nov. 21, 2014, died Dec. 30, 2014.

Former Leavenworth guard sentenced

KS KANSAS CITY — A former prison guard at the U.S. Penitentiary in Leavenworth has been sentenced to two years of probation for accepting bribes in exchange for providing inmates with contraband tobacco.

The U.S. attorney's office said Michael Harston, 53, of Kansas City, Mo., also was ordered Monday to serve six months' home confinement and pay \$4,800 in fines.

The indictment said Harston took bribes from October 2013 to August 2014. Federal prosecutors said video surveillance at the prison captured Harston distributing tobacco to inmates. The indictment also says Harston received payments from inmates' relatives through wire transfers ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

Spelling bee launches 'Spellebrity' contest

DC WASHINGTON — Even if you're not a champion speller, there's a way to win a trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

For the second straight year, Scripps has launched its "Spellebrity" video contest.

Students who enter will produce videos about their love of reading. A panel of judges will pick the best 10 videos, and a public vote will determine the top five. The kids who make those videos will be invited to next year's bee, which will be held in late May at a convention center outside Washington.

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NFL under fire in botched Brown case

BY ROB MAADDI

Associated Press

After mishandling Ray Rice's domestic violence incident two years ago, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said "I got it wrong" and vowed "the same mistakes can never be repeated."

It doesn't appear the league learned its lesson.

The NFL placed kicker Josh Brown on paid leave Friday, a day after re-opening its investigation into the 2015 domestic abuse complaint against the 14-year veteran. Brown said in journal entries and emails released by police on Thursday that he repeatedly verbally and physically abused his former wife, Molly Brown.

The revelations left fans outraged because Brown received only a one-game suspension following the league's 10-month investigation into the case.

So, the big question is this: How much did the Giants know and what did the NFL know about Brown's history of abusing his ex-wife?

"You very rarely have a Ray Rice video," Giants co-owner John Mara said in August.

Mara told WFAN radio on Thursday he was upset about the latest information.

"I am certainly disturbed by what we read," Mara said.

"He has admitted to us that he abused his wife in the past. I think what is a little unclear is the extent of that, but what we have read about is obviously disturbing."

The league said its "investigators made repeated attempts — both orally and in writing — to obtain any and all evidence and relevant information in this case from the King County Sheriff's Office."

They were denied because it was an ongoing investigation.

However, Sheriff John Urquhart told KIRO Radio in Seattle that the NFL failed to go through proper channels and the investigator didn't identify himself as working for the league.

"At no time has the NFL ever filed a written public disclosure request for any of these files. Period. It's never happened," Urquhart told the station.

Goodell explained the league's position in a BBC interview on Friday.

"You have to make decisions on whatever information you have," Goodell said in a transcript of the London interview provided by the BBC. "We take this issue incredibly seriously. ... When it happens we're not going to tolerate it. So we have some new information here, we'll evaluate that in the context of our policy and we'll take it from there."

Molly Brown did not respond to messages seeking comment from The Associated Press. A law firm representing the kicker declined to comment.

Here's some of the information and allegations police summarized based on interviews they conducted with Molly Brown:

■ Molly Brown stated Josh Brown had been physically violent to her on more than 20 different instances over the past several years.

■ Molly said she never received medical attention for any of the abuse.

■ Molly said "Giants attorneys" helped the troubled couple deal with a landlord who threatened to "blackmail" them and tell the media about police being called to their apartment in Hoboken, New Jersey, two or three times in 2014-15. "They were fully aware about it and they you know, basically did what they needed to do to make the guy go away," she told detectives in May 2015. The Giants disputed the "blackmail incident" in August. "We think the situation ... may have been a dispute that Josh had with his then-landlord in Hoboken over lease issues. During that dispute, Josh felt threatened by the landlord or her boyfriend. We advised Josh on how to resolve that issue and referred him to

a lawyer to handle the matter," the team said after Mara spoke to reporters on Aug. 23.

■ Molly said Josh showed up drunk at her hotel room during the 2016 Pro Bowl week and was pounding on her door to get in the room. She called NFL and hotel security, Josh was escorted away and the NFL put Molly and her children in a different hotel room.

■ Molly stated several friends of theirs, including other players in the NFL, were aware of the domestic abuse in her relationship with Josh. She said Josh even sent a personal email to several of their friends with an attached letter in March 2014 in which he admitted to being abusive to Molly.

■ Molly felt the NFL had clearly given the message that no one within the league was going to do anything to help.

■ Molly feared people from the NFL and the Giants would look to pressure her into making this go away, so that Josh and the team would not face any negative press.

■ Molly was upfront that in her experience the NFL publicly says they have a no tolerance policy on domestic violence, but the reality is that they do more crisis management and look to cover things up.

Seattle running game lags behind standard

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — The standard in Seattle has been that the Seahawks are going to be among the better teams in the NFL at running the football.

Except this year. And it's not as simple as Marshawn Lynch no longer being around.

Going into Sunday's game against division rival Arizona, the Seahawks are near the bottom of the league in a number of rushing categories. Seattle is 25th in the league averaging just 88.8 yards per game and 30th in yards per attempt at just 3.2.

"We're OK. We just need more emphasis added, we just need more turns," coach Pete Carroll said. "We need to run it more. We just need more numbers."

There are a number of reasons that Seattle's run game is off this season, from

a revamped offensive line to presumptive starting running back Thomas Rawls being limited in the season opener then suffering a hairline fibula fracture in Week 2. He won't be back for a few more weeks. Christine Michael is Seattle's leading rusher with 354 yards, but 106 of those yards came against San Francisco in Week 3.

The biggest culprit in derailing the run game could be Russell Wilson. Or, more specifically, a combination of the ankle and knee injuries that have slowed Wilson early in the season.

Through five games, Wilson has just 35 yards rushing and no run longer than 9.

Compare that with the first five games of previous years and it's clear what's lacking. Through five games last year, Wilson had 198 yards rushing. In 2014, it was 221 yards on the ground. And in 2013, Wilson

had 233 yards rushing.

The running threat usually posed by Wilson simply has not been there this season and the trickle-down is affecting the rest of Seattle's run game.

"It's a different run game that we're using right now," offensive coordinator Darrell Bevell said. "It's still a part of us, it's still something that we've always had, just the zone read part of it is not been used as much as we've gone to other styles of runs."

Seattle has 140 rushes in five games and only 11 have gone for 10 yards or more; the Seahawks have 34 rushes for no gain or negative yardage. The revamped offensive line has shown flashes of being the bullying unit offensive line coach Tom Cable wants, but also moments where simple blocks aren't being made.

Blue Jackets get confidence-boosting win

Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — After a disastrous 0-8 start last year that turned into a season-long tailspin, the Columbus Blue Jackets were desperately looking for a confidence-boosting early win.

They got it Friday night.

Rookie defenseman Zach Werenski had a goal and an assist, and teammates Nick Foligno and William Karlsson picked up their first goals of the season as the Blue Jackets beat the Chicago Blackhawks 3-2.

Columbus' Sergei Bobrovsky turned in a solid game, blocking 32 shots and surviving a desperate Chicago power-play rally near the end of the game.

Columbus never trailed in Friday's game.

"Just to fight through against a pretty good team that was coming at us in the second half of the game, saw our goalie play really well and keep us there, it just gives us a notch of confidence," Columbus coach John Tortorella said. "We keep on going from that."

Tyler Motte and Richard Panik scored for Chicago (2-3-0), and Corey Crawford had 25 saves.

The Blue Jackets (1-2-0) took the lead when the 19-year-old Werenski netted a wrist shot from the point during a power play at 9:10 in the first period. It was his team-leading second goal of the season, with Alexander Wennberg and Foligno credited with assists.

The Blackhawks tied it up 2:29 into the second period when a shot by Jonathan

Toews ricocheted off Bobrovsky's pad and was put back by Motte, his first goal of the season.

Columbus took advantage of the power play again at 4:36 of the second when Foligno tapped it in from in front of the net, with assists from Werenski and Cam Atkinson.

Fourth-line center Karlsson got the Blue Jackets' final goal with 6:16 left in the second when he tipped in a shot from David Savard through traffic.

Panik pulled Chicago within one at 5:54 into the third period, popping in a goal from in front of the net off a pass from Gustav Forsling, but the Blackhawks couldn't tie it.

The Blackhawks have lost two straight.

"Even when it seems like we're doing a good job, bounces go against us," Toews said. "We're just a little shaky in some areas, so unfortunately another two goals we gave up in (penalty kill), it's just not good enough. We deserve all the criticism. We just need to keep finding ways and go deep in really trying to dig ourselves out of this right now."

Foligno greeted Bobrovsky at the end of the game with an embrace.

"Bob had been waiting a little while for that one," Foligno said. "It was nice, just for him, too. He's played outstanding the first two games for us, and it was nice to be able to reward him with a big win and a big hug."

Islanders 3, Coyotes 2: Johnny Boychuk's short-handed goal early in the third period lifted host New York to the victory.

Dennis Seidenberg and Ryan Strome also scored for New York, and Jaroslav Halak stopped 23 shots for his first win of the season and the Islanders' second in three home games after opening with two road losses.

Brad Richardson and Radim Vrbata scored 13 seconds apart in the first period to tie the score for the Coyotes. Louis Domingue had 28 saves as Phoenix lost its third straight on the road after one home win.

The game marked the first NHL meeting between the Strome brothers. Dylan Strome, 19, was the third overall pick by the Coyotes in the 2015 draft and made his debut earlier this week. Ryan Strome, 23, was the fifth overall pick in the Islanders in the 2011 draft.

Red Wings 5, Predators 3: Gustav Nyquist had a goal and an assist for Detroit.

Justin Abdelkader, Drew Miller, Tomas Tatar and Darren Helm also scored as Detroit won its third straight. Petr Mrazek stopped 30 shots.

P.K. Subban, Mike Ribeiro and Mike Fisher scored for Nashville, which has lost three straight. Pekka Rinne finished with 38 saves.

Fisher's power-play goal with 4:46 left pulled the Predators within 4-3. It was Fisher's third goal, all on the power play.

Helm had an empty-net power-play score with 22 seconds left, his fourth goal of the season, to seal the win.

Giants' Beckham fined for removing helmet

Associated Press

NEW YORK — New York Giants wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. was fined \$24,309 by the NFL on Friday for taking off his helmet during a touchdown celebration last Sunday against Baltimore.

After scoring the go-ahead 66-yard TD with 1:24 left in the Giants' 27-23 win, Beckham drew an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty when he removed his helmet while in the back of the end zone. He then ran toward the sideline, tossed his helmet and kept celebrating.

Detroit safety Glover Quin was also fined \$24,309 for his helmet-to-helmet hit on Los

Angeles wide receiver Tavon Austin.

Washington tight end Vernon Davis drew a \$12,154 fine for taking a jumpshot with the football at the crossbar after a touchdown as if it were a basketball.

Tennessee safety Daimion Stafford was docked \$18,231 for a horsecollar tackle on Cleveland's Terrelle Pryor, who made a 16-yard catch to the Titans 14. The penalty moved the ball to the 7 and the Browns scored three plays later to set up a final onside kick which they didn't win in a 28-26 loss.

Carolina's Kawann Short was fined the same amount

after being called for a personal foul on what appeared to be a hit to the mouth of Saints quarterback Drew Brees.

Three Miami players were fined \$12,154 for unsportsmanlike conduct in a 30-15 win over Pittsburgh: offensive tackle Ja'Wuan James and running backs Jay Ajayi and Damien Williams.

Singer kneels during anthem at Heat game

MIAMI — A woman performing the national anthem before an NBA preseason game in Miami on Friday night did so while kneeling at midcourt,

and opening her jacket to show a shirt with the phrase "Black Lives Matter."

The singer was identified by the Heat as Denasia Lawrence. It was unclear if she remained in the arena after the performance, and messages left for her were not immediately returned.

Heat players and coaches stood side-by-side for the anthem, all with their arms linked as has been their custom during the preseason. Many had their heads down as Lawrence sang, and the team released a statement saying it had no advance knowledge that she planned to kneel.

Cleveland fans in Merritt-al bliss

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — The guest list for Ryan Merritt's upcoming wedding could be growing.

Cleveland's rookie pitcher has made a lot of new friends.

A most improbable October hero for the Indians, Merritt has been overwhelmed by the generous outpouring from some Cleveland fans for sending wedding gifts to him and his fiancée, Sarah, after the 24-year-old pitched so well in the AL pennant-clinching victory over Toronto on Wednesday.

Not long after Merritt worked 4¹/₃ scoreless innings and the Indians earned their first World Series trip since 1997, fans found the couple's wedding registry online and flooded them with gifts.

Now Merritt is up to his neck in blenders, wine glasses, oven mitts and muffin tins.

"At first I thought it was all a joke," the soft-spoken Texan said Friday as the Indians prepared for Game 1 on Tuesday night. "It's the last thing I thought was going to come out of all of this. It's pretty emotional. Awesome."

As he met with reporters, Merritt, an unknown to most Cleveland fans days ago, nervously struggled to express his gratitude toward the strangers, who have made him feel so welcomed even though he just joined the team.

Merritt was a late addition to the ALCS roster following a series of setbacks to

Cleveland's starting rotation. But handed the ball to start Game 5, Merritt, who pitched just 11 innings for the Indians during the regular season, shook off stomach butterflies and shut down the Blue Jays on two hits before manager Terry Francona turned things over to Andrew Miller and the rest of his devastating bullpen.

Merritt gave all he had, and Indians fans repaid him with dozens of gifts. He's been humbled by their expression of thanks.

"Sarah checked our registry this morning and I think we only have three gifts left to go," he said shyly with a smile. "I hope there's some things left for my friends to buy. I might have to register for some other stuff for them to buy something. It's great. You just get the support that I'm getting from the Cleveland fans, and that they not only care about my career but they care about my personal life, too."

Merritt was introduced to Sarah Brushaber by a minor league teammate, pitcher Mitch Brown. The couple has set Jan. 27 as their wedding date in her home state.

"Minnesota. So we're going to have a cold wedding," Merritt said with a shiver.

There will certainly be some nerves that day, but the left-hander has already shown that he can handle big moments.

Francona said the team had no hesitation in using Merritt in the most critical game this season.

"That was a lot to ask of that kid," Fran-

cona said. "We all thought he could handle it or we wouldn't have done it. But for him to kind of come through the way he did. I remember before the game, I told the guys that were up there, he's going to grow from this game, whether he does well or not. The experience he got in 4¹/₃ innings is going to help him down the road for sure."

Merritt, who was selected with the 488th overall pick in the 2011 draft, said he found out something while pitching under pressure unlike anything he had ever felt.

"I think you learn that you can handle the stress of the game," he said. "You can handle those types of moments. That it's really tough to stay calm in. And I guess I can get hitters out. Can probably name off a lot more things, I just can't think of them at the moment."

Merritt's performance may have earned a larger role in the World Series, but he hasn't been told what the Indians have in mind.

"I'm just here if they need me," he said. "If they want me to start, I'll start. If they want me to come out of the 'pen, be a long guy, it's fine. Whatever they need me to do, I'm here."

And if he comes through again, Merritt and his bride-to-be might have to consider sending out more wedding invitations.

That's fine with him.

"If more people want to come, I guess they can come," he said. "I don't care who shows up, I guess."

Tribe's Salazar could return in time for Series

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — After weeks of being broken and bloodied, the Indians' pitching staff may have reinforcements in the World Series.

Starter Danny Salazar, who hasn't pitched since Sept. 9 because of tightness in his right forearm, has thrown well in recent bullpen sessions and might be able to pitch for the first time in this postseason.

Manager Terry Francona said Friday that Salazar has "let it go" during some recent workouts and has not been restricted to throwing only fastballs and changeups.

"I think he's ready to pitch," Francona said as the AL champions awaited their Series opponent.

Salazar will throw a three-in-

ning simulated game Saturday and the Indians will assess his status before deciding whether to have him on their World Series roster. Salazar went 11-6 with a 3.87 ERA in 25 starts, but Francona said it's possible the hard-throwing right-hander could be used in relief.

"I think the good news is if Danny pitches, and he pitches healthy and he's throwing the ball over the plate, we have a really good pitcher for however amount of innings he's built up for, which can potentially help us," he said.

The loss of Salazar and Carlos Carrasco, who broke his right hand when he was hit by a line drive Sept. 17, has forced Francona to juggle his rotation and be creative with a bullpen which has been extraordinary in October.

But a healthy Salazar would give Francona an interesting weapon as he might be able to pair him with rookie Ryan Merritt for a start or use him with Mike Clevinger.

The Indians are also hoping Trevor Bauer will be available after his Game 4 start in the AL Championship Series lasted less than an inning when his stitched right pinkie opened up and he had to be replaced because of excessive bleeding.

Bauer sliced his finger open while repairing a drone prior to the ALCS, an unusual accident that put added strain on Cleveland's staff.

Bauer said Friday that his finger is healing and he's confident the added rest before the series opens will allow him to pitch. The quirky right-hander

was asked when he'd be ready.

"Game 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7," he said.

Francona was told of Bauer's comments.

"That would be a little better than the last series," he said sarcastically.

Francona said the team met with hand specialist Dr. Thomas Graham to discuss Bauer's progress. After Bauer workout out on Friday, Graham was going to add another suture.

"He thinks it's healing really good, there's just that one area down at the bottom where the skin isn't quite as healthy as the rest of it," Francona said. "So he's going to suture it back up so it won't bleed. That's really the only issue. And he's very confident that this is not going to be an issue."